

THE COUTTS BANK

Grim Old Storehouse of Money and Romance.

THE ECCENTRICITIES OF ITS FOUNDER

His Granddaughter is Now the Baroness Burdett-Coutts.

HER HUSBAND A YOUNG MAN

Special Correspondent of The Evening Star.

LONDON, December 26, 1900.

No. 39 Strand is, from the outside, a blank, gloomy and insignificant building, perhaps the most ordinary in the whole length of that undignified thoroughfare.

The bare, grimy bricks of the three upper stories are broken only by small, plain windows, while stone facings around the arched doorway and windows of the ground floor do not lighten the general effect or pretend to even the slightest architectural merit.

The building stands back a few yards from the Strand, and the four distinct roof-levels suggest that it once consisted of four ordinary terrace houses.

No outer sign marks this as one of the world's greatest treasures. No pilgrim's eye rests upon this grave of old romance.

Cold, mysteriously dull, unapproachable, amid the light and bustle of London's central thoroughfare as a baronial castle in the shires, probably not one passer-by in a thousand knows what or where it is, and not one in a hundred thousand knows that its records are exceptional even among the more romantic records of British history.

At the bottom of the stairs leading down to the basement, a small plaque on the wall bears the name of Thomas Coutts, who, it is said, was the first to open a bank in London.

He was a Quaker, and the name is still in use, though the name of the bank has been changed.

But it is the fourth son, Thomas, who most concerns this story, and exhibits in the highest degree the eccentric vigor and independence of this extraordinary family.

He and James established the famous bank in the Strand. But it was a different Strand in those days. Where is now the Hotel Cecil on the east, Adelphi terrace immediately south, and the Charing Cross railway bridge to the west, effectually blocking out all view of the river, there was then, we are told, "an uninterrupted view of London's greatest avenue, the Strand, and the river, and the distant prospect of the Kent and Surrey hills."

The Adelphi was then about to be built; but Thomas Coutts was strong enough and rich enough to procure the making of a street from the back of his house which should give him a view of the river, and the southern prospect. Long afterward the custom of a member of the firm living over the bank was maintained, and some of the living rooms still occupied by the Coutts family have been so occupied.

The Coutts house, however, lived not in the bank, but a few steps away, in St. Martin's lane, between Fratton square and the now傍 and almost respectable district of Seven Dials.

Here we come to the first of this eccentric tale. His housekeeper, Elizabeth St. George, was known as Betty, and was described as "a blooming young rustic, remarkable for cleanliness, industry and good humor, much admired on account of the freshness of her complexion and the vivacity of her manner." She was the beloved for the modesty of her demeanor and the unaffected evenness of her temper.

The same writer described Coutts himself as "a forcible of his health and still more of his reputation," but a different opinion was expressed by another, who said of him, "He is a very likeable man."

He was a Quaker, and the judge Mrs. Coutts to have known her own mind even if she was good humored. And indeed she soon won the respect of the family into which she had stepped. The ex-housekeeper was three children all right, when she became the wife of the famous radical, Sir Francis Burdett, M. P., and mother of the present Baroness Burdett-Coutts; while the second became the wife of the Earl of Guilford, and mother of the Baroness North. The third married the first Marquis of Bute and became the mother of the Countess of Harrowby and a connection of Lucien Bonaparte by the marriage of her son with his daughter.

Thomas' Second Wife.

No fine connections or even his business relations with the royal family could tame Thomas Coutts into obedience to the conventions of society, and immediately after his wife's death, when he was well beyond his seventieth year, he concluded a second and still more remarkable marriage.

Harriet Melton, then in the early summer of her beauty and the fullness of her dramatic success, had as a little girl been picked up by some charitable ladies who found her rambling about the country with her mother and stepfather as strolling players.

She was a girl of great beauty, and the family of Burdett-Coutts, before the illustrious actor was full recognition, with the purse of Thomas Coutts, first, as patron, then as husband, at her command, her charities became more munificent. For some time before the marriage, however, she was the center of much newspaper scandal and blackguardish abuse. She gave up the stage at his request, and he bought Holly Lodge, Highgate Hill, of Sir Henry Vane Tempest for her at a cost of \$12,000. Within a month of the death of his first wife, Betty, he was married to Harriet, and the two were the happy parents of a son, Thomas, who was born in 1880, has twice civil lord of the admiralty, and was knighted eight years ago.

He became the second, and the third married the daughter of the Duke of Marlborough, and whose sisters married Sir M. White-Ridley, the late home secretary, and the present Earl of Aberdeen, respectively.

He is a nephew of an old partner in the banking firm.

PRINCE OF LIARS

A "Tall Story" Man Who Will Soon Be Heard From.

FAMOUS AS A NEWSPAPER FAKER

Heir to the Accomplishments of Ananias and Munchausen.

SOME TALES HE HAS TOLD

(Copyright, 1901, by A. T. Vance.)

Written for The Evening Star by Arthur T. Vance.

News comes from a remote corner of Texas that Joseph Multhattan, the most stupendous and ingenious liar of his time, has recently turned up in that part of the country. It is now in order for the newspapers to be on their guard, for in his prime Multhattan perpetrated and got into circulation through various important newspapers hoaxes that would have made Baron Munchausen feel like an amateur; and there is no guarantee that he won't go into the business again. The last previous definite news of Joe was some five years ago, when it was announced that he had retired to the wilds of California to recuperate from his arduous mental labors. Soon after it was rumored that he was dead, and his years of persistent silence give credence to the rumor.

Multhattan had been a truthful commercial traveler for years before the promotion for big stories telling took possession of him. His localities weren't interesting enough, so he proceeded to liven them up with the products of his own imagination.

The Pittsburgh Leader was the medium selected, and he kept the news busily circulating among the little hoaxes he got up among well-known people. Presently these personalities palmed upon him and he sought to exercise his genius in a larger field.

About this time the first crematory in the United States was erected at New York, Pa. Multhattan wrote an article announcing that a cremation would

take place at a date two weeks ahead of the completion of the furnace, and Little Washington soon had an army of expectants to entertain, besides six artists from the illustrated papers. When they found that there was no corpse they sought for Mr. Multhattan to supply that important omission, but he was far away.

One on George.

It was in 1875 that Multhattan got up his first really imposing fake. He discovered that the remains of George Washington were petrified, and that some well-known citizens who were very desirous of seeing the Washington monument completed were about to remove the petrified body to the exposition at Philadelphia, to place it on exhibition during the centennial year.

The monument had been erected at a cost of \$50,000, but the Pittsburg Gazette supported it warmly.

For a time thereafter Mr. Multhattan's stories, according to his own account, what might be called "plain lie," went to Kent, Kentucky, where he had brought his wife, Anna, and their three children, a son and two daughters, to a house of comparative luxury, where he was the son of Sir Francis Burdett-Coutts, his wife, Anna, was the daughter of the Duke of Marlborough, and whose sisters married Sir M. White-Ridley, the late home secretary, and the present Earl of Aberdeen, respectively.

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DID NOT SUIT THE CLASS.

Lawyer's Address to a Cooking School Was a Rank Failure.

From the Pittsburgh Times.

The real cynic is always a man with a history, and this is true of a comparatively young Pittsburgh lawyer who views all sweet girl graduates with unnatural distrust.

This isn't the commencement season, but it required several months for this story to leak out. The attorney, who is a gifted speaker, was invited to make an address to the graduating class of a training school for nurses in a town not more than a good day's walk from Pittsburgh. For his subject he selected a general theme embracing as much of medical jurisprudence as he thought the profession of the girls required them to know. He was on hand promptly, togged out in a full-dress suit and adorned by a rosebud. He went to the hall as directed by the hotel clerk, and the master of ceremonies beckoned him to ascend to the platform. The former had met him previously during the progress of a trial at the court house in that town.

In due season the lawyer was asked if he would make some remarks.

The Pittsburger thought that was a rather odd way of putting it, after inviting him weeks beforehand, but he made one of his most fetching bows and waded into the theme.

"Young women," he said, "are not to be compared in their pain and suffering

which predominates; not your suffering, but the suffering of others. Under your care it may be that many may die, and it is all important for you to know that the name of human life, but also what you must do in the name of the law. Your possibilities for doing good are only equalled by your opportunities for doing harm. It is not to be denied that a physician may be able to undo the injury a man may have wrought through carelessness or ignorance for the occasion which arises when a human life will pay the penalty of your negligence."

By this time the master of ceremonies was in the front row of seats looking about him, and the class in the front row of seats looked about him, too.

"It is said that Harriet spent \$200,000 of pin money, much of it in charity, in the first year of her married life. When the banker died, a few years later, he left her a sum of \$50,000 in addition to the Holly Lodge property. Five years after his death she married Aubrey de Vere, ninth Duke of St. Albans, himself a descendant of

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GUESsing A CHIff's Height.

From the Century.

Shortly after making the turn to the east, and in the depths of a beautifully terraced canon, we came upon a copious hot spring running out of the bluff upon a low bench, where it made a large, clear pool of water. The sight of this natural bath of warm water was tempting to tired and dirty men, and here we made our first and only stop for recreation. After lunch most of the party proceeded to the warm pool, and, stripping, we literally soaked for hours in its delightful waters, stopping occasionally to soap and scrub our linen. While here the party indulged in guessing the height of the inclosing cliff. The air was so clear in this country that one always underestimates the height of a building. The party, however, decided from one of his new guides explained to him that he had been addressing the graduating class of a thriving cooking school.

ASTRONOMICAL ACHIEVEMENTS.

Multhattan dubbed him "professor," and described him as a successful observer of sun spots and an astronomer of remarkable attainments and high scientific reputation. According to Multhattan's story, it was "Professor" Klein who had discovered the star. The late Richard A. Proctor, the eminent English astronomer, was in the United States at this time. Unfortunately for him, he didn't know about Multhattan, and he hurriedly resolved to save his reputation by getting away from the star. Klein, however, had devoted several columns of his paper to the star, and the average reader felt that he could go right out and manufacture a malleable glass himself with a few simple implements. Next, at the suggestion of a new guide, he went to New York, and there he got such a decided front at the wrong commencement until one of his new guides explained to him that he had been addressing the graduating class of a thriving cooking school.

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